

Rokas Zickevicius

Totally surreal experience. Still kind of hard to comprehend what had happened out there.

Started the race at low 9's pace which felt comfortable, and non-forced. Then hitting the first beach section at mile 13 or so, I kept running at about the same pace, when I got caught up by [Regina](#). We chit chatted for a little bit, about races, and time goals for DAYTONA 100. After Regina told me her 'A' goal and how many races she ran, I was totally embarrassed to tell that I had set sub 17h for my first 100. But after a few minutes, she told that needs to slow down and, I just kept going. Half a mile later, I have noticed that my heart rate was getting out of hands, and started approaching 170 zone, which forced me to start walking to avoid burning out. First idea that popped in my head was "what a hell am I kidding of sub 17h goal, that lady run quite a few hundreds, and she has more modest goals? I think 20h will probably suffice, if I can even do that". Of course, I minute later Regina cruised by me at her own pace, and left me in a dusts.

At the end of beach section, I had caught up with [Noelani](#), but she left me behind right after since I had to stop and change back to road shoes. Then we had passed each other back and forth several times, till we teamed up to run at the same pace while chatting to distract attention from those long miles that were still ahead. But different crew stops split us, before teaming up again at around mile 50, where we joked around saying that we are approaching the unknown, since neither of us did a longer distance than 50 miles before. Soon we had caught and passed Patrick Hrabos, who was having some of his own problems, and had to slow down. So we kept running together for another 5 miles or so, till we Noelani had to stop to attend her blisters, and I had to look for a bathroom. After I got out. She was long gone. Didn't even see her in sight!

At mile 60, I had to stop again. This time to fix my feet. Felt like I am approaching dangerous zone of blisters, so I popped them, and then just "duct tapped" everything, just to be safe hehe...By the time I was done, Patrick reach same mile, and we teamed together for some

miles together. Feel miles in, I got my second wind, and left Patrick, since he had stop to refill, and then just kept going, and going...pushing pace at moments to low 8s since the temperatures started dropping, and sun was setting. It felt like if I will keep same pace to the end I still have chance of reaching my set time goal.

Approaching my 75, I had finally caught up with another 100 mile runner. This time, it was [Joe](#). The feeling was terrific, running relatively fast miles so late into the race next to such a legend, while having some small talk. Abruptly, we caught Noelani with her pacer but since I didn't feel like slowing down, and my total pace average approaching 10:12 again, which was right on 17h limit. Plus Joe was still besides me, which felt like extra pair of wings haha...though several miles passed and Joe said that he needs to slow down, since he is starting to feel nauseous, and encouraged me to keep pushing to catch up with the first guy, since I was now in second place. Thoughts were rushing in my head, maybe I can even win this thing. But then again, I thought that I need to brace myself, and don't burn out.

A mile after Joe left behind, I started seeing blinking red lights, but that wasn't first guy, who was at the moment Daniel Kosla. It was someone running 50 miles, actually walking. I tried to encourage the guy to run a little bit with me, but he didn't felt like, so I just sped off. I had passed a few more 50 mile runners, until one 50 mile runner, was like "you see that red blinking right in front is 1st place person in 100 mile race. He said he just passed me a few moments ago". That was a music to my ears, and extra motivation to keep pushing for that magical first place, along the mine own time goal. I got right on the heels of Daniel but had to slow down, since I had planned stop with my crew, and also was on schedule for some solid foods, so I ended up walking while eating.

Daniel took advantage of that and just kept running, and was gone around the corner in minutes. But I wasn't feeling like letting him running away, so I picked up the pace, started hunting him down again. This time, it was much quicker, since he was clearly hurting already, plus he was running in sandals the whole way! Which is

unbelievable. We exchange with names, quick chat, and Daniel shook my hand, before I sped off now chasing that delusional time goal which felt almost hand reachable. I was feeling really well and kind of in a zone, plus there were more runners who were chasing that 50 mile beast. Seeing runners fighting with all they had was a total motivation to keep pushing. Around mile 89, I had stopped again for a quick shoe change, since there was 4-5 miles of sand again. Once, on beach, I passed few more runners, but started feeling really tired. My pace started dropping, and I started walking more and more.

Though lights behind me kept me thinking that the 2nd place was possibly right there, which in a way kept me on my toes, plus that damn time goal, that I didn't want to let it go yet. Finally, I had reached road again. Quick change of shoes, and back on track, though my legs are getting really fatigue. Running through the quite residential neighborhood, was really hard. It was pretty late already, the streets were empty with occasional passing by cars, and some sections pretty dark without any lights at all. Until, I saw a guy on a bike approaching me. Now I thought this might be fun, since I got road ragged 2 times while running along the beach earlier. Some kids decided that it was pretty fun to throw some cups of soda. At least it wasn't glass bottles, like it happens in Miami sometimes doing long runs at night.

Anyways, it was [Dave](#) on his trusty beach cruiser. I was so glad to have someone along to take my thoughts of those long miles. He rode along for a mile or so, while we chit chatted and I reached my crew. I asked my dad to run a few miles with me till we reach a last two miles of beach just to keep a faster pace. Once, I got on the beach the finish felt almost hand reachable but at the same time so far. 2 more miles! I kept looking for motivation, since my pace had dropped, and I was already passed that sub 17 hour goal, till I saw some blinking lights. Ohhh...boy that was fun. I started running slowly, then a little bit faster, and faster but the light was still there. Until I had released that it was actually some ship off the shore with blinking lights. I started laughing, and finish line was right there, less than half a mile away. I crossed the line in 17:25 which was at least 26 minutes too slow. Although it felt like I felt short of conquering

myself as a competition, it was really exciting nonetheless and hard to comprehend what had happened out there. Next day, was terrific. Seeing the last runners coming in, after they gave all what they got to reach the finish line of that 100 or 50. Also, the beer mile! How can we forget such a spectacle with finish full of drama for the first place? Way to go Michele!

P.S. so technically, I had reached the sub 17 hour goal. Well at least on Strava, 16:33 was moving time. But I guess there is still plenty of miles to run, and things to learn before I will reach that sub 17 in overall, not just moving time!